

In the Claims

Kindly cancel Claims 1-11 without prejudice or disclaimer of their subject matter.

Kindly add the following new Claims 12-17:

12. (New) A method for fabricating a semiconductor device, comprising:
forming a contact hole in an organic insulating layer using a patterned resist layer formed over the organic insulating layer as a mask; and
ashing the patterned resist layer by a plasma treatment in the presence of a mixed gas containing nitrogen and hydrogen, and forming a protective film on a surface of the contact hole during said ashing, wherein the protective film is formed by reacting the organic insulating layer with the nitrogen.

13. (New) A method as claimed in claim 12, wherein the mixed gas is $O_2+N_2H_2$.

14. (New) A method for fabricating a semiconductor device, comprising:
forming an organic spin-on-glass (SOG) film over an interconnect layer;
forming a contact hole in the organic SOG insulating layer so as to expose the interconnect layer using a patterned resist layer formed over the organic SOG insulating

layer as a mask; and

ashing the patterned resist layer by a plasma treatment in the presence of a mixed gas containing nitrogen and hydrogen, and forming a protective film on a surface of the contact hole during said ashing, wherein the protective film is formed by reacting the organic SOG insulating layer with the nitrogen.

15. (New) The method as claimed in claim 14, wherein a material of the organic SOG layer is obtained by adding an alkyl group to a silicon oxide.

16. (New) A method as claimed in claim 15, wherein the mixed gas is $O_2 + N_2H_2$.

17. (New) A method as claimed in claim 14, wherein the mixed gas is $O_2 + N_2H_2$.